

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 30
Issue 2 *Fall*

Article 28

2000

Text on the Weather

Brian Lennon

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lennon, Brian. "Text on the Weather." *The Iowa Review* 30.2 (2000): 101-113. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.S271>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

Brian Lennon

TEXT ON THE WEATHER

lets go to the other meeeeteeeeoooooroooooologgies

—TRISTAN TZARA

“IN MY DREAMS, I am a Weather-Man on TV. I originate in this medium, it feels right, it pits me against the Vicissitudes of Life. When the call comes to rouse the City-dwellers from their slumbers it is not too soon to dream of love, the hot filaments of its success. That is what fills me. When you perform a Task you are alive.

“I say ‘originate’ in order to counter your objection that nothing can originate, that all is flux and loop and cycle, that there is no alpha and omega, that there is no line along which you drag your life saying ‘Now I’m getting somewhere, now I’m getting there.’ I say ‘medium’ in order to counter your objection that I am a Pretender, that I am faking it, that I am giving you nothing, that I am being Hysterical. The threshold of my house is not Hysteria. There is nothing in the Weather to control. I am all corners, you cannot get to me.

“To know the weather is to know that you are helpless, not to lose hope
...

INTERVIEW WITH THE SUCCESSFUL WEATHER-MAN

Tell us how you became etc etc etc

I was all jammed up. Unmotivated. I had a complacent office job where mostly I did the crosswords. One day the boss went on a rampage and by sundown I was the only one left employed. So I quit and took all the paper clips with me.

What happened then

I was jobless. There is nothing better, until you begin to starve. I had to find a hustle. An acquaintance told me she had supported herself for a year by playing darts in Boston bars. Beating drunken macho men out of twenty, thirty, fifty bucks.

Oh how interesting could you elaborate

It sounded good to me. I dislike drunken macho men. I like bars. I thought: I'll move to Boston, take up darts.

And then

(The Successful Weather-Man sprints from the room)

TERMINOLOGY

1. hysteria: The more or less total loss of emotional control. [The term is from the smug sequences of male-dominant thinking. Greek males, priding themselves on their emotional steadiness, ascribed loss of emotional control to the behavior of women. Concluding that it stemmed from the malfunctioning of some organ specific to women, they imagined they had located the source in *hustera*, the womb, whence *husterikos*, of the (malfunctioning) womb.]

2. gestalt modification: The alteration of an unusual word form into one more or less approximating it but more familiar. See *galleywest*, *hangnail*, *sea cook*.

3. bellot: Winds blowing through the narrow Strait of Bellot, connecting the Gulf of Boothia and Franklin Strait in the Canadian high arctic.

AXIOMS; POSSIBLE OR PROBABLE SLOGANS

1. Weather is unpredictable and cannot be forecast.
2. Hurricane Hunters fly into the eye of the storm.
3. Blizzards are the most dramatic and perilous of winter storms.
4. Weather—Just Like Life.
5. You Can't Beat It, Just Take It.
6. True or false: you are safe from a tornado in your basement.
7. One of the surprise products of a hot summer afternoon thunderstorm is the almost magical transformation of the landscape from verdant green to icy white with the onset of a hailstorm.
8. Photographs taken from space enable one to see and interpret a wide range of meteorological phenomena.
9. In less enlightened times primitive peoples assigned animistic rôles to weather phenomenae such as the water spout, dust devil (haboob), et al.
10. We are living in more enlightened times.

POSSIBLE OR PROBABLE NARRATIVES

1. Girl meets boy or girl, or boy meets girl or boy; weather ensues.
2. Boy or girl, plus small dog, are separated from home by giant tornado.
3. Girl or boy fails to make it in publishing, resolves to have a go at meteorology.
4. Boy or girl appears as forecaster on the local news. Friends cheer; family sob.
5. Girl or boy becomes nationally famous Weather-Woman or Weather-Man. However, her or his Weather-Map persistently malfunctions on the 11 o'clock wrap-up, making her or him an object of persistent ridicule. Family sob more heartily.
6. Boy or girl, nursing heartache, converts to a wholly positivistic world view, resolving never to permit anything from occurring unforeseen, "ever again."
- 7.

MEDITATIVE OPENINGS FOR A TEXT ON THE WEATHER

1. As long as I can remember I have been fascinated by the weather, etc.
2. Weather is just that—a task, a trial, a _____, etc.
3. **weath • er** *n.* 1. state of the atmosphere with respect to wind, temperature, cloudiness, moisture, pressure, etc. Etc.
4. More than ten years ago, I drove through bad weather, etc.
5. It is ten years ago. I drive through bad weather, etc.
6. Toward the end of a spell of especially inclement weather, etc.
7. Love is like weather—, etc.
8. O, the Weather!

NOTES TOWARD AN ESSAY ON THE WEATHER

stratus undulatis: as though what went softly piling over the land were nothing more than fluffy clouds

stratus translucidus: as in a photograph you once made in a valley north of Rome

stratus opacus nebulosus: as over Manhattan, on one of those days when you never once unclench your teeth

stratus opacus uniformus: as when silence fills your apartment overnight

NOTES TOWARD AN ESSAY ON THE WEATHER

Notes toward Intentions

- To ensure that readers of the Essay do not attempt fruitlessly to comprehend the Weather.
- To encourage them to acquire their own Instruments.
- To arrange the Essay so that Weather speaks for itself.

Notes toward Procedures

- To choose the proper cloud formations.
- To arrange for geographically lucid winds.
- To clearly articulate the threat of disaster.

NOTES TOWARD AN ESSAY ON THE WEATHER

The two principal approaches to the Weather:

1. At all costs to endure the Weather, even when the Weather takes over, and runs, and ruins, and wrecks, and wracks. At all costs to court the Calm in the Eye of the Storm. If possible to fly like a Hurricane Hunter into the Eye of the Storm.

2. To follow the Bellot, or other winds, viz., the Chinook, the Chocolatero, the Collada, the Coromell, the Easter, the Palouser, the Sonora, the Washoe Zephyr, where they may take you.

EXPLICATION

The more or less total loss of emotional control. As in:

AA!

In my dreams I am a Weather-Man on TV. The subject, a demented rationalist, longs simultaneously for the social utility of life-saving predictions and the wholly selfish glory of their success.

I'll move to Boston, take up darts . . . Clearly the Successful Weather-Man never made it to Boston.

Girl or boy fails to make it in publishing . . . This assumes that Girl or Boy had in fact attempted to “make it” in publishing.

More than ten years ago: Refers to a specific time in the life of the Successful Weather-Man.

ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE SUCCESSFUL WEATHER-MAN AND A
HABOOB

SUCCESSFUL WEATHER-MAN: Out, out!

(HABOOB *slinks away*)

NOTES TOWARD AN ESSAY ON THE WEATHER

To make clear that there is nothing one can “do about” the Weather. The Weather is given. The Weather is not to be “improved.” The Weather may be critiqued, as in: God-damn this Weather! But it cannot be influenced.

At the same time to make clear that it is “the meaning of our lives” that we may critique the weather. Without this, what would we do? Simply live under it, like cats.

INTERVIEW WITH THE SUCCESSFUL WEATHER-MAN

What are the so to speak larger issues etc. we're dealing with here

Moonbow aurora parhelia halo of 22°

Do you believe that you can read the future in the sky

The sky overhead is nature's canvas

Do you ever feel that your task is hopeless

The medical term for snow blindness is niphablepsia

Note:

Some material taken, in modified form, from these sources:

Ciardi, John. *A Browser's Dictionary: A Compendium of Curious Expressions & Interesting Facts*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Ludlum, David M. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Weather*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.